

# ***Cedar Rapids Gazette***

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## **Great development urged**

By Kurt Rogahn, *The Gazette*

SHUEYVILLE — Iowans don't easily talk up what is special about living here.

So Iowa's new "Great Places" initiative will not only coach Iowans to be less self-effacing but also get 18 state agencies to help develop great places to live, public officials from Linn and Johnson Counties were told Thursday by Anita Walker, director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

Members of the public have a chance to learn more about the initiative at 4 p.m. June 1 at CSPA Hall, 1103 Third St. SE in Cedar Rapids. Walker's department is coordinating the "Great Places" initiative, announced in January in Gov. Tom Vilsack's Condition of the State address.

A "Great Place" could be a Victorian neighborhood, a road along the Mississippi, a downtown cultural district or a wild prairie, Walker said.

Perhaps a cultural district needs to develop housing for the artists who work there, or a community needs a trail to bring people to the district. Walker told the Johnson/Linn County Public Leadership Group, meeting at Shueyville United Methodist Church, that the Great Places Initiative is looking for three pilot projects to develop.

"You invite us to the table," Walker said. "We send a team of coaches to visit with your groups. Their job is to listen to what your idea is. You don't have to know what all the state programs are. That's our job."

State resources go beyond money, Walker said. The Department of Corrections has a work force that already helps clean parks and rivers. Perhaps a Great Place will be promoted on the state's liquor distribution agency trucks or on Iowa Lottery's scratch games.

Walker said the ultimate goal is to develop healthy, strong communities where people choose to live.

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